

Wheaton and Anthony Building (Second)  
75 Westminster Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-378

HABS  
RI  
4-PROV,  
166-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WHEATON AND ANTHONY BUILDING (SECOND)

HABS No. RI-378

Location:

75 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island  
Plat 20, Lot 9

Present Owner:

Fleet National Bank, Providence, Rhode Island  
(formerly Industrial National Bank)

Present Occupants and Use:

The building, which has been vacant since early 1982, has been occupied by a number and variety of commercial and business concerns. Its most recent ground floor occupants were E. L. Freeman, a stationery store; Eddie and Son, a restaurant and the Home Loan and Investment Company.

Significance:

Built in 1872, the Second Wheaton and Anthony Building was designed by the locally prominent architectural firm of Stone and Carpenter in the Second Empire style. One of the earliest cast iron faced buildings in the city, it is now one of only a handful which remains. It once housed a number of professionals, Puritan Life Insurance Co., the Builders Exchange (a group of contractors), Westminster Bank and Tilden Thurber, the large jewelry concern. It was the first building in the city to have an elevator, which is still in place. An extremely handsome example of later 19th Century commercial architecture, the building's high architectural quality is a function of the plastic wall articulation and the unusual roof treatment. Its visual quality is enhanced by its juxtaposition to the adjacent buildings and, in turn, the streetscape and the historic character of the abutting Custom House District are much enhanced by the Wheaton and Anthony Building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1872
2. Architect: Stone and Carpenter
3. Original and subsequent owners:
  - Henry Anthony Estate  $\frac{1}{2}$  (8/1854)
  - Joseph Banigan  $\frac{1}{2}$  (11/1895)
  - Joseph Banigan Estate  $\frac{1}{2}$  (6/1899)
  - Anthony Realty Co  $\frac{1}{2}$  & Joseph Banigan Estate  $\frac{1}{2}$  (6/1937)
  - Henry Anthony Estate  $\frac{1}{2}$  & Joseph Banigan Estate  $\frac{1}{2}$  (12/1939)
  - Joseph W. Riker & Charles A. Reynolds (3/23/70)
  - Industrial National Bank (6/9/70)
4. Builder:
  - Not known
5. Original plans and construction:

No original plans are known to exist. The five story building has a cast iron facade (with the fifth floor exterior articulated by a mansard slate roof on the western half of the building). The other exterior walls are of brick masonry construction. A flat, tar papered roof covers the building.
6. Alterations and additions:

Ground floor alterations have been made over the years. The original cast iron storefront has been obliterated except for a small section on the east side of the building at the southeast corner. Upon cursory inspection of the interior, much of the original layout and finishes are still intact on the upper floors.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

#### 1. Architectural character:

The five story building is sheathed in brick with a cast iron facade capped by a boxed cornice. The facade above the first floor is elaborately articulated by a rectilinear pier-and-spandrel system separating large wood sash windows with cast iron ornamentation and patterning on the window mullions and piers. The western half of the building is crowned by a mansard roof with round-hooded dormer windows and iron cresting on the roof's edge (now removed). A flat roof covers the eastern half. The overall visual effect is a building of handsome proportions and harmonious scale. Only the ground floor storefronts now detract from its modest elegance.

#### 2. Condition of fabric:

Despite years of neglect and vacancies, the building is in remarkably good condition structurally. The cast iron facade has lost much of its polychromatic coats of paint and is rusting but shows no sign of serious deterioration. The wood windows are still, for the most part, intact. Inside, paint is peeling throughout due to lack of heat and localized water damage and small areas of plaster have fallen; but the building exhibits no sign of serious instability, rot or dislocations.

### B. Description of Exterior:

#### 1. Overall dimensions:

Width: 77'  
Depth: 82'  
Height: 72'+

Total Gross S.F. = 34,650

#### 2. Foundations: Stone

#### 3. Walls: Brick masonry exterior walls, cast iron facade.

#### 4. Framing: Wood joists, stud walls, iron columns, etc.

#### 5. Chimney: Brick

B. Description of Exterior (Con't.):

6. Openings: The main entrance to the upper floors is made of aluminum and glass. The ground floor storefronts are mid-20th Century additions. The double-hung wood windows above the first floor appear to be original to the building.
7. Roof: The flat roof is covered with tar and asphaltic paper. The mansard wall in front is sheathed in slate shingles. An elevator hoistway projects through the roof. Two skylights cover the stairhall and light well.

C. Description of interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Most recently occupied by a stationery store, a restaurant and a travel agency.
- b. Upper four floors: See floor plan attached and photographs.

2. Stairways: A central stairway dramatizes the interior of the upper floors.
3. Flooring: Tongue and groove wood flooring with some floors covered with carpeting or linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on wood lath throughout with decorative ceiling moldings.
5. Openings: Wood panelled doors, interior wood windows, a portal with side lights and fan light transom, etc.
6. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Steam radiators in perimeter offices. No air conditioning. No ventilation system.
  - b. Lighting: Assortment of fluorescent and incandescent fixtures of which few, if any, are original.
  - c. Plumbing: System and fixtures in varying states of disrepair.
  - d. Elevator: It is believed building had the first hydraulic elevator in the city. (Ornamental metal entrances still in place.)

D. Site:

1. Setting: The primary cast iron facade was placed on the lot line along Westminster Street (facing south) in harmony with other construction along the street. Its visual quality and scale considerably enhances the character of the streetscape.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

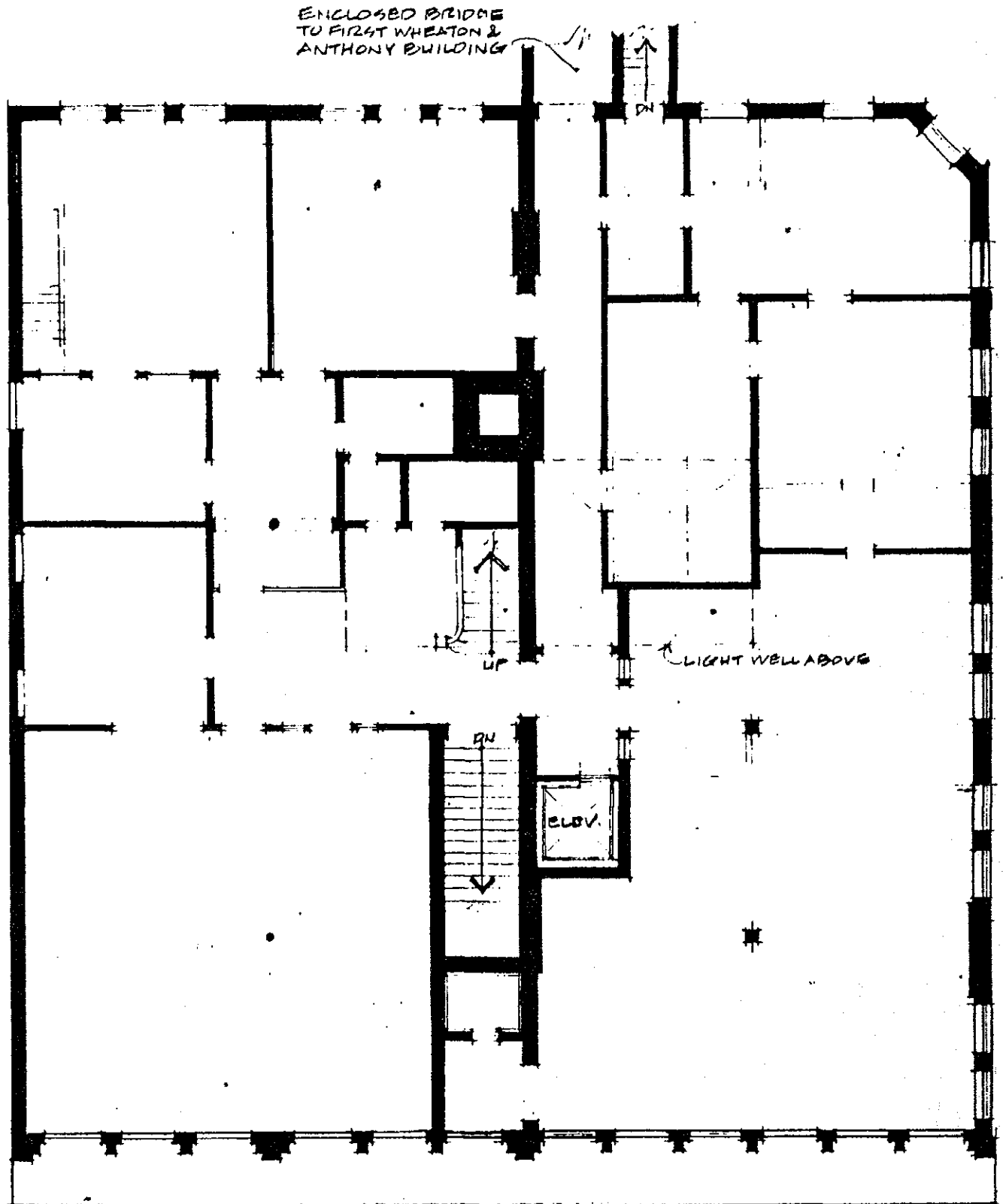
- A. Original architectural drawings: None known to exist.
- B. Early views: The best and earliest known view of the building is a photograph taken in about 1913 from Weybosset Street before construction of the Turks Head Building. Source: Rhode Island Historical Society Library (copy Neg. No. RHI (x3) 2791). Glimpses of the building can be seen in earlier photographs of Westminster Street.
- C. Bibliography:
  1. "Downtown Providence - Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-P-5" by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, May 1981. This publication lists books and manuscripts on the development of downtown Providence. Primary sources have not been investigated in the preparation of this report.

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Attachments: Second Floor Plan  
1913 Photograph (xerox copy)

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Providence, Rhode Island

9/22/82



75 WESTMINSTER STREET / SECOND FLOOR PLAN.

0 4 8 16 FEET